

The International Society for Orthodox Church Music 2015: A Travel Essay

RICHARD BARRETT*

In June of 2014, I was a participant in Kurt Sander's Pan-Orthodox Liturgical Music Symposium at Northern Kentucky University in the United States. While I was there, a gentleman whose acquaintance I had newly made, one David Lucs, on hand to give a presentation on children's music education, got my attention about the possibility of attending the International Society for Orthodox Church Music's 2015 conference in Joensuu, Finland. I had been a member of the organization for some years but had never worked up the necessary combination of will and wherewithal to attend the meeting. "It's a great experience," David told me. "People come from Greece, Romania, Serbia, and everywhere else, there's a fantastic sense of collegiality, and everybody always learns a lot."

Shortly thereafter, in a moment of synchronicity, Fr. Ivan Moody was encouraging me to submit a paper for the 2015 conference, which was to have a theme of hymnographic creation. "Would a presentation on The Psalm 103 Project be appropriate?" I asked. "Of course!" was Fr. Ivan's immediate reply. I promised to work something up.

When I discussed the matter with the board of The Saint John of Damascus Society, the Orthodox church music organization I work for and that is spearheading The Psalm 103 Project (see related article), the president got excited about the possibility of presenting what we're working on to an international audience, and once I got the word that my paper had been accepted, he was willing to support the travel budget for the conference. A sufficient confluence of events having been achieved, I registered and booked a plane ticket.

And so it was that in June of 2015, I hopped planes from Boston to Paris to Helsinki to the Finnish college town of Joensuu, home to University of Eastern Finland, for ISOCM's tenth anniversary conference. David Lucs' promise of international collegiality was almost immediately fulfilled, with Orthodox musicians from all over the world – twenty-two countries – in attendance; there were composers, singers, and scholars from Serbia, Romania, Greece, Finland, Italy, Denmark, Sweden, Portugal, the UK, the USA,

* Richard Barrett, PhD Candidate at Indiana University. Address: 41 Cedrus Ave #1, Boston, MA 02131 USA; e-mail: richardbarrett@johnofdamsacus.org